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## News with Neumann



If you visit the State Office, things may look in disarray as we finalize the reconfiguration of Technology and Public Affairs' work areas to provide room for the State Soils Staff, due to the MLRA reorganization. At this point, most of Technology is back at work, but Public Affairs' staff (Becky Fletcher and Kris Vance) are primarily teleworking and don't have access to their phones. Please use Communicator or e-mail to contact Public Affairs for the time being. We anticipate the reconfiguration to be ready by December 1.



*Kimberly Neumann,*  
*Acting State Conservationist*



On Thursday, October 11, NRCS Chief White visited a family-owned farm in Ohio to roll out the agency's national Soil Health efforts. Soil Health will be integrated into standards, programs, and public affairs activities. Awareness and education components will include fact sheets, brochures, videos, web, radio and social media announcements, as well as local field days. Make sure you visit NRCS' National Soil Health website "Unlock the Secrets in the Soil" to find additional soil health resources: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/soils/health>.



Soil health is not a new concept—it is a return to our roots! Chief White stated at the kick off that "Soil Health is our future." The Hoosier Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society is holding a symposium on November 16<sup>th</sup> that will feature discussions about the science and economics of soil health, as well as current studies that will help us measure the ecological and economical impact of soil health practices. We're excited to hear from national and state leaders, including Chief White.



As we enter 2013, I anticipate more challenges and opportunities for our NRCS family. We are working under a continuing resolution, and a new Farm Bill has not been passed. While we continue working under a continuing resolution, I know you will continue to deliver the same exceptional service our landowners and partners have come to respect.



The first FY13 Protracts reports were issued by the Regional Conservationist's Office, and I am proud to report that our efforts to manage contracts are paying off and showing up in these national reports. Thank you to everyone, from the field up to the State Office, for your excellent work on contract management. Keep it up!

**\*\*\* Employee Spotlight \*\*\***

**Randy Van Matre, District Conservationist—Davies County**



**Q: How did you become interested in conservation?**

I've enjoyed the study of conservation since I was a child. As I've grown older my interest has been piqued by the ever clarifying need for sustainable harvesting of environmental resources. Economic

growth, largely fueled by increasing world prosperity, has increased the spotlight on sustainable agriculture. I am sold on the wisdom of promoting soil health as a foundational concept for mitigating future demands on our agricultural lands. Moreover, the negative externalities, such as high levels of nitrates in groundwater, hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico, loss of topsoil, etc., associated with high input agriculture are greatly reduced by this relatively simple but holistic approach.

**Q: What do you enjoy most working for NRCS and Indiana landowners?**

Without a doubt, it is working with individuals, groups, and partners who view conservation long term. My ultimate goal is

to educate landowners on the value of sustaining conservation management long after federal assistance has been expended. Indiana's soil health initiative is a perfect corollary to the biblical parable ....Feed someone fish they will eat for a day, teach them to fish and they will feed themselves for a lifetime.

**Q: Who has had the most influence on your career?**

I cannot pick one individual, but rather everyone I've interacted with. I hope to gain insight and perspective from everyone and apply that in a manner appropriate to the situation.

**Q: What do you do in your spare time when you're not working for NRCS?**

I like to golf, read, work around the house, and follow sports.

**Q: Do you have any professional or personal goals for 2013?**

Yes, completing the National Emerging Leaders Development Program (ten week-long sessions done with three more to go) and smoothing out some of our field office processes. And personally, I need to get back to going to the YMCA four days a week.

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**\*\*\* Employee Spotlight \*\*\***

**Business Management Leaders Program**



**Michelle Gaston** is one of the two new Program Specialists assigned to the State of Indiana Administrative Staff. She currently works out of the NC Area 2 Office in Salisbury, NC. Michelle attended NC State

University and graduated from Catawba College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry. She is a Veteran of the United States Army and also served in the United States Army Reserves where her unit was deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Michelle is the mother of a 15 year old son and a 5 year old daughter. When she's not spending time with her family, Michelle enjoys reading a good book. She also likes to travel.



**Celesta Dunston** is a summa cum laude liberal studies graduate of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (Aggie Pride!) who comes to the agency with 15 years of federal work experience, including service in the military and with the Veterans Administration. She recently completed the BMLP program and is assigned to the Indiana State Office. She is excited and

motivated to work with the Indiana State Office, is ready to continue to enhance her skill set, and meet new challenges. Dunston is a resident of Greensboro, NC. She is actively involved in her church and her community. She regularly volunteers at the International Civil Rights Museum and Center and aspires to become a docent, so she can take people who visit the museum on tours. Her hobbies are charitable work, community work, traveling and visiting historical places, jazz, grilling out, planting flowers, shopping and spending time with family.

## Hoosier Happenings

### KUDOS to...

**Dave Stratman**, State Biologist, for his presentation at the pollinators workshop on the effect of pollinators on agriculture.—Submitted by **Kimberly Neumann**, Acting State Conservationist.

**Adam Heichelbech**, EQIP/WHIP Program Specialist, and **MaryJo Woodruff**, CSP Program Specialist, for working on meeting the 60 percent livestock goal using existing acres under contract at the state level, taking the workload off the field.—Submitted by **Kimberly Neumann**, Acting State Conservationist.

**Jennifer Chen**, Resource Conservationist, for her assistance in providing background on Chinese etiquette and culture in preparation for the Chinese Delegation's visit to the State Office.—Submitted by **Kimberly Neumann**, Acting State Conservationist.

### ICP WINS CONSERVATION AWARD

The Indiana Conservation Partnership was recognized September 27th by the Upper White River Watershed Alliance with the Exceptional Commitment to Conservation Award for our work on the Conservation Cropping System Initiative. The Alliance spoke highly of the ICP and our ability to work together as a partnership, one of the best in the country.



Indiana Conservation Partnership organizations, in conjunction with the agricultural industry and Hoosier farmers, developed the Conservation Cropping System Initiative, which promotes a systematic approach to production agriculture by encouraging the adoption of long-term continuous no-till practices.

Congratulations to all of you for your part in this project.

### ECOLOGICAL SITE TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO INDIANA

On September 10 through 12, Stacey Clark, Ecological Site Inventory Specialist, from St. Paul, Minnesota, and Mike Kucera, Soil Quality and Ecosystems Branch, National Soil Survey Center, provided hands-on training and technical assistance to NRCS staff from Indiana and Michigan for Ecological Site (ES) concept and State and Transition Model (STM) development, for the Eastern Grand Prairie and Kankakee Sands subsections of MLRA 111C. The participants were Ecological Sciences staff and Soils staff from Indiana, and two MLRA ES specialists. The session included a presentation on how ecological site descriptions (ESDs) contribute to conservation planning, Farm Bill programs and other uses, and an overview of ESD project management. Draft Ecological site concepts for Eastern Grand Prairie and Kankakee Sands were developed utilizing soil properties, landforms, geology, and other abiotic factors. Soil components were reviewed and tentatively correlated to the appropriate ecological site based on plant communities observed and site concepts developed during the workshop. Hands-on facilitation also led to the creation of a STM for two sites using the site concepts previously drafted for the project area. An STM is a conceptual tool for management, which accounts for plant communities observed and the ecological processes leading to change. These ecological site concepts, correlated soil map unit components, and STMs will be reviewed and further developed, as part of the ESD acceleration effort in the area.





## **\*\* SPECIAL EMPHASIS \*\***

### **NW REACHES OUT DURING LATINO FESTIVAL**

On September 15, the Northwest area stepped up and put their best foot forward during the annual Latino Festival in Lafayette. Northwest area staff partnered with the Tippecanoe County SWCD to assist in educating the county's growing Hispanic population. Staff provided information on a variety of natural resource stewardship topics. Many popular publications were made available in both English and Spanish. Many thanks to the following for helping out with this event: Gary Warring, Deb Duley, Lindsay Martinez, and Mark Eastman from NRCS; Chris Remley and Megan Benage from the Tippecanoe SWCD. Approximately seventy-five individuals, both youth and adult, asked questions about becoming better stewards of our environment. Proceeds from the event help provide scholarships for students and award grants to organizations that address the needs of the local Hispanic/Latino community.



*Chris Remley works the NRCS booth at the Latino Festival.*

### **Partnership Links**

**IN Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Bi-Weekly**

Updates: [www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html](http://www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html)

**IN Conservation Partnership:** [www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html](http://www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html)

**IN Dept. of Environmental Management:** [www.in.gov/idem](http://www.in.gov/idem)

**IN Dept. of Natural Resources:** [www.in.gov/dnr](http://www.in.gov/dnr)

**IN State Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation:**

<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

**Purdue University:** [www.purdue.edu](http://www.purdue.edu)

**USDA Farm Service Agency:** [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

## **Hoosier Happenings (cont.)**

### **RETIREES HELP PRESERVE INDIANA'S HISTORY**

While photos should be documented shortly after print, the reality is they are often not, leaving behind images of unknown faces, places, and events. And, as the years pass and new employees are hired, we find it increasingly difficult to identify people, places and events within our historical images. On June 14, 2012, nine former Soil Conservation Service/Natural Resources Conservation



*Former Public Affairs Specialist Ken Pyle is making his way through the urban conservation practice folder*

Service employees volunteered their time to sort through approximately 3,000 historical slides and photos to help identify the people that have impacted Indiana NRCS for so many years.

Historical photos are not only fun to look at and reminisce about old times, but they also document important events within the Agency's history. Whether it be the first PL-566 watershed structure that was built in the state or a conservation practice that was implemented on a piece of land, each of these photos tells a story of Indiana's conservation history. Properly identifying and recording these documents is imperative to preserving our history for future generations.

By utilizing the talents of these nine men and women, Indiana NRCS' Public Affairs department is able to archive these photos and slides properly. The slides will be digitized and used for future publications, presentations and as historical references. We thank these great Earth Team volunteers who have continued their service to the public and NRCS even after their retirement.



*Standing left to right: Becky Fletcher, Jerome Daugherty, Dick Schafer, Charlie Gossett, Julie Pyle, Ken Pyle. Seated left to right: Jim Dunaway, Bob Eddleman, Jane Hardisty, Bob Bollman*

## Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

### CHINESE DELEGATION VISITS INDIANA TO LEARN ABOUT CONSERVATION ON THE LOCAL LEVEL



On September 24th and 25th, members of the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources Delegation visited several sites throughout Indiana with the goal of learning how conservation is applied at the local level in Indiana.

The delegation included Director General Liu Zhen of the Department of Soil and Water Conservation, Ministry of Water Resources of China, and four other government officials from the Ministry.

The Ministry of Water works with urban and rural soil and water conservation issues. There is a separate Ministry of Agriculture that deals with crop production, and also a separate Ministry of Forestry. All land in China is owned and regulated by the government.

On September 24th, the delegation visited DeKalb County in northeast Indiana. The DeKalb County SWCD Staff and Board Chairman, Acting NRCS Area Conservationist Scot Haley, and District Conservationist Derek Thompson met with the delegation and discussed:

- The structure of NRCS and how NRCS and the SWCD partner to implement conservation,
- An erosion concern scenario, highlighting how they work with a producer using technical tools,
- The process of using Toolkit, RUSLE2, and technical information to plan and educate operators on environmental and production benefits of conservation practices,
- How NRCS financial programs are implemented, and the importance of them being voluntary.

On September 25th, the delegation wrapped up their trip by traveling to Indianapolis. Kimberly Neumann, Acting State Conservationist; Jill Reinhart, ASTC Special Projects; Becky Ross, Acting State Resource Conservationist; Barry Fisher, State Soil Health Specialist/Agronomist; and Jerod Chew, District

Conservationist met with the delegation in the State Office and visited a local farm.

Kimberly gave the delegation background information on our State Office and field structure, how we deliver policies and technical standards, how we provide technical assistance at the local level, how the Farm Bill drives financial assistance for farmers, and how we work with our partners.

Barry Fisher introduced the delegation to Soil Health, demonstrating the Slake Test and Rainfall Simulator test. The delegation became very animated, and Director General said, “I’ve never seen this

before. This demonstration for farmers is very impressive.” Through these demonstrations, the delegation saw the conservation benefits of managing for soil health through no-till, cover crops, etc., but had questions about production impacts, application to terraces, measured impacts of the practices, and adoption rates.

The group then traveled to Mike Starkey’s farm, who utilizes soil health management systems, including a bioswale. The farm drains to Eagle Creek watershed, a drinking water source for Indianapolis. The delegation heard from Mr. Starkey, Harold Thompson, Watershed Alliance Ag. Liaison, and Bob Barr, Research Scientist, IUPUI, about the work in the watershed and on the farm. They learned how many local, state and federal groups work together, and about the economic benefits to the producer and society. They discussed the regions in China where soil health management would best apply.

The delegation expressed their sincere gratitude to all the Indiana NRCS employees who took time out of their busy schedule to visit and discuss the local process.



## **DIVERSITY DAY A SUCCESS**

The fourth annual Cultural Diversity Day was hosted by the Civil Rights Committee, with a focus on Asian cultures. Two speakers focused on the immigration of Burmese into the Fort Wayne area, due to political strife in their country. Information on their culture, struggles to get to a free country, and why they don't want to be referred to as 'refugees' were included in the presentations and displays. Other speakers highlighted Asian cultures, including India and Taiwan. One speaker shared what it is like to live in America being from India, a country made up of many diverse cultures. Assumptions are often made that all people from India like the same food, speak the same language, and share the same cultures. The speaker from Taiwan educated attendees on Buddhist principles. NRCS staff had the opportunity to enjoy an Asian lunch, and network during breaks. While attendance was limited for this year's Diversity Day due to the new national meeting request deadlines, Kimberly Neumann assured attendees that next year's event will again be open statewide. Special thanks to Asghar Chowdhery, Asian American/Pacific Islander Special Emphasis Program Manager, and the CRC subcommittee that organized this incredible event.

*"Striving for Excellence in Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion"*

## **Personnel Update**

### **SELECTIONS FROM VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Ruth Montgomery selected for the CIT Leader at Rensselaer CIT effective 9-23-12  
Brian Musser selected for the District Conservationist position at the Angola FO effective 12-16-12  
Gary Struben selected for the State Soil Scientist position on the Technology Staff effective 10-7-12  
Ashley Linville selected for the District Conservationist position at the New Castle FO effective 10-21-12  
Kevin Shide reassigned for the District Conservationist position at the LaGrange FO effective 12-16-12

### **RETIREMENTS**

None

### **RESIGNATION**

Justin Bender, Soil Scientist at the Plymouth MLRA Office effective 9-21-12.  
Seth Harden, Soil Conservationist at Salem Service Center effective 11-2-12

## **Mark Your Calendar**

### **NOVEMBER**

- 12: Veteran's Day—NRCS office closed
- 13: Advanced Cover Crop Training  
SAC/FAC Meeting
- 15: Indiana Soil Health Team Training with Dr. Nichols  
LT/CR Diversity Training
- 16: Economic Benefits of Soil Health Symposium
- 27: Northwest Area Meeting

### **DECEMBER**

- 4: Northeast Area Training
- 6: Civil Rights Committee
- 11: Northwest Area Partnership Meeting  
SAC/FAC Meeting  
State Technical Meeting
- 12: Southeast Area Meeting
- 20: IFAC Meeting

You can find up-to-date information about upcoming events on the Indiana SharePoint site at:

<https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/central/in/Lists/Calendar/calendar.aspx>